

Jailhouse Journalism: the Fourth Estate Behind Bars

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talents as a writer and speaker to achieve his goal of making the SHSM the largest state historical society in the country. Between 1960 and 1985, Richard S. Brownlee turned the society more toward scholarly research and writing while expanding its service to Missourians who were neither members nor researchers. Finally, since 1985 James W. Goodrich has sought to fit the society's programs to the modern definition of public history.

In many ways, the history of the Missouri society contrasts with that of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI). In its first half-century, the SHSM stressed its role as a collector (particularly of newspapers) and as a membership organization staunchly independent of the university in whose library building it was located. At the same time, under Benjamin F. Shambaugh, the SHSI focused on scholarly research and publication by the university's graduate students and faculty. During the second half of the century, while the SHSM drew closer to the University of Missouri, the SHSI focused on popular history in its publications, moved into its own building, and followed an independent course. The history of the Missouri society that Alan Havig describes thus provides an interesting mirror for the Iowa experience.

Jailhouse Journalism: The Fourth Estate Behind Bars, by James McGrath Morris. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998. 251 pp. Illustrations, graphs, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$37.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW CECIL, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

In 1937 Tom Runyon was convicted of murder and bank robbery and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Iowa State Penitentiary at Fort Madison. To pass the time, Runyon wrote articles for the prison monthly, *Presidio*, became editor of the magazine, and gained such a wide following for his columns and profiles of inmates that he was asked to write a memoir, which was published in 1953. "Being a prison editor," he wrote, "means walking a tightrope between officials and convicts, unable to tell the whole truth about either" (14).

In *Jailhouse Journalism*, James McGrath Morris recounts the stories of Runyon and other noteworthy prison editors and publications. The book, as Morris notes in the preface, combines institutional history and biography. As a descriptive study, the book succeeds admirably, offering a series of interesting and nicely illustrated vignettes. Morris traces the arc of jailhouse journalism from debtors prisons in the early nineteenth century, to the first true reformist prison newspapers in the 1870s, to the end of America's rehabilitative justice system in the 1980s,

which signaled the end of many prison newspapers. Ultimately, as the author acknowledges in his introduction, the study suffers from several limitations: broader issues affecting prison publication are noted only in passing, and publications of women and minority prisoners fail to appear at all. While those are serious limitations, *Jailhouse Journalism* is nonetheless an interesting collective biography of prison journalists.

Shaping My Feminist Life: A Memoir, by Kathleen C. Ridder, with foreword by Jill Kerr Conway. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998. xx, 202 pp. Illustrations. \$24.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY LOUISE ROSENFELD NOUN, DES MOINES

Kathleen Culman Ridder, born in 1923 in New York City, has been married for 55 years to Robert Ridder, son of the former owner of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. She characterizes herself as a wealthy, upper-class, middle-of-the-road Republican and feminist. She is a Catholic who believes in freedom of reproductive choice. Ridder traces her journey to feminism from her days as a Junior League volunteer to numerous civic improvement and educational projects, and membership on the board of the St. Paul Urban League. When the women's movement emerged in the 1960s, Ridder slowly came to realize the social and economic difficulties faced by other women, although personally she had never felt oppressed. Her main interest has been in promoting the women's athletic program at the University of Minnesota, to which she and her husband have donated substantial funds for scholarships. Ridder made a brief attempt to liberalize the Roman Catholic church, but soon came to realize that this was a hopeless task, best left to time to alter the church's attitude toward women.

Ridder mentions the many women and men she worked with in numerous organizations without giving in-depth descriptions of either her coworkers or the operation of their programs. This limits the interest of non-Minnesotans in her activities. The reader's interest is also distracted by numerous references to organizations by their initials or acronyms. A list of abbreviations along with the organizations to which they refer would have been helpful.

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